

Church Union

News and Views

Organ of the Continuation Committee
of the
South India Joint Committee on Union

Vol. IV

MAY, 1934

No. 6

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CHURCH UNION

News and Views

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Vol. IV

MAY, 1934

No. 6

Editorial

This Number

As was intimated in the March number, this is the last of the original bi-monthly series of *Church Union—News and Views*. It will henceforth be issued quarterly, and probably in a changed form, but it will continue to give authoritative news with regard to the Scheme of Church Union in South India and to provide a platform for responsible statements on related subjects.

The present number contains two such statements. The one is by Mr. P. O. Philip, one of the Secretaries of the National Christian Council, who writes with full knowledge of the recent movements towards the Unification of the Orthodox Syrian Church of South India. The other is by Dr. J. H. Maclean, and will be found in the extracts from his article in the *Calcutta Diocesan Record* for April and in his review of Dr. Warr's book on 'The Presbyterian Tradition'. The two taken together give a very valuable statement of the Presbyterian position.

Mr. Gulliford's statement of the Proceedings of the South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church regarding Church Union is necessary for the understanding of some of the proceedings of the last meeting of the Joint

Committee, which had these Methodist recommendations before it, together with those of the S. I. U. C. and of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon : it completes the series of the official resolutions of the consulting Churches up to date.

Finance

We are happy to say that in response to the generous offer of a friend to contribute Rs. 100 towards a small guarantee fund for the work of the Joint Committee two further offers of Rs. 100 each have been received towards the sum of Rs. 500 which he named. The Managing Editor will be very pleased to receive further offers to the required amount, so that these generous promises may be claimed.

One kind correspondent in referring to finance has said that the annual subscription of Re. 1 for this magazine is 'absurdly low' and has suggested that it be raised. We do not propose to follow the suggestion, but we would again urge our readers to help in this matter by securing fresh subscribers at the rupee rate ; and, of course, any who feel that the subscription is too low, may rest assured that any additional contribution will be very gratefully received.

In this connection, we are asked to state that in addition to the 1934 edition of the Scheme, on sale at the C.L.S., and including all the changes made in the last meeting of the Joint Committee (4 annas net), a number of copies of the 1933 edition are still available at the C.L.S. and may be obtained at the reduced rate of As. 3: these may be found of value for purposes of comparison with the latest edition.

The Continuation Committee

The Continuation Committee was entrusted by the Joint Committee with the task of preparing drafts on a number of the important questions which it was impossible fully to deal with in February. It will meet at Kotagiri in the Nilgiris for several days, beginning on June 20th, and the prayers of our readers are asked for God's guidance in its deliberations.

A League of Intercession

The following statement has been sent to us for publication, and we have no hesitation in commending it to the attention of our readers.

'A group of Indian and missionary workers have felt constrained by God's Spirit to enter upon a new effort to make intercessory prayer effective in the Church in behalf of a true spiritual Revival. This endeavour seeks to unite the prayer-forces of Christ's followers in this land. Accordingly, an Appeal for Prayer, and also a Covenant to be signed by those who wish to join the

League, have been prepared. These may be had free of charge, post-paid, by addressing The Office, Covenant of Intercession, Byculla, Bombay 8.

No further published statement is to be made regarding this matter, but it is hoped that pastors of congregations will bring this to the attention of their people, and invite all who believe in prayer to unite in this ministry of intercession.'

Articles

Proceedings of the South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church regarding Church Union

The Methodist Church in England, in the desire to have a thorough understanding of what is happening in South India regarding Church Union, sent out the Rev. W. F. Lofthouse, D.D., as a special delegate to make careful and diligent enquiries and report. Consequently the South India Provincial Synod at its last meeting, in January, 1934, gave special attention to the proposed Scheme of Union for South India. The Synod had for its consideration the resolutions passed by the Methodist Conference of 1933, the reports of the Synod's committee on Church Union, resolutions sent forward by the four District Synods in South India, and other documents. Dr. Lofthouse was present and greatly helped both in Committee and Synod in their deliberations and conclusions. The Synod referred certain matters to the delegates to the Joint Committee for action.

In the following report the resolutions and statements are set forth as presented by the delegates to the Joint Committee and not in the actual words passed by the Synod.

The Synod first considered the Scheme of Union generally and passed the following resolution :—

1. The Synod unanimously re-affirms its desire to continue the negotiations regarding the Scheme of Union, and urges on our delegates to the Joint Committee to work for the alteration of such points as at present hinder our complete acceptance thereof. The Synod believes that the following suggested changes are of most immediate urgency in this regard :—

(i) To alter para 9 on page 7 * so as to read—

'9. The uniting Churches accept the historic episcopate in a constitutional form as part of their basis of union. There are among the uniting

* The references are to the 1933 edition of the Scheme of Union.

Churches differing views and beliefs about episcopacy, which have been frankly recognised throughout the negotiations. For example, some regard episcopacy merely as a form of church government which has persisted in the Church through the centuries, and which is now expedient for the Church in South India. Others believe that episcopacy is of divine appointment and that episcopal ordination is an essential guarantee of the sacramental life of the Church. The acceptance of episcopacy by the uniting Churches, thus differing in their views and beliefs concerning it and concerning orders of the ministry, is not to be taken as committing the united Church to the acceptance of any particular interpretation of episcopacy; and no such particular interpretation shall be demanded from any minister or member of the united Church, nor shall it be a determining factor in its relations with other Churches.'

(ii) On the same page to alter line 3 in para. (iii) so as to read:—

'It being understood, as stated above, that no particular . . .'

With a consequential alteration on page 25, para 10—

'The Church of South India accepts and will maintain the historic episcopate in a constitutional form. But this acceptance does not commit it to any particular interpretation of episcopacy or to any particular view or belief concerning orders of the ministry; and it will not require the acceptance of any such particular interpretation or view as a necessary qualification for its ministry, nor make it a determining factor in its relations with other Churches.'

(iii) On page 14, line 12 in para. 2, that instead of 'any exceptions to the rule of an episcopally ordained ministry, and if so . . .' read . . . 'any exceptions to the rule that the ministry shall consist of those who have been episcopally ordained within the Church, and if so . . .'

(iv) That para. 9 on pages 24–25 begin as follows:

'The Church of South India recognises as presbyters men who have offered for the ministry because they have been conscious of a definite call from God to that work, who have been recognised by the Church as giving evidence of that call through their possession of gifts appropriate to their calling, and who, after due training, have been ordained and set apart for the work of the ministry, according to the rules laid down in Chapter V. They are commissioned by God to be dispensers . . .' as on page 25.

(v) That the following be substituted as an alternative to para. 1, Chapter V, on page 45:

'It is the special duty of a presbyter—

'(1) To watch over the flock committed to him; to teach, to warn, to rebuke and encourage; and to maintain the doctrine and discipline of the Church in which he is a minister with all fidelity;

‘(2) To be a leader in the work of preaching the Word to the congregation committed to him, to strive to bring sinners to repentance and forgiveness both by public and private exercise of his ministry, to encourage and give full scope for the exercise by church members of the various ministries referred to in the chapter of this Constitution on the Ministry of the Laity, and to forward all efforts directed to the establishment of righteousness and the removal of wrong in the community ;

‘(3) To lead the worship and administer the Holy Communion in the congregation, and conduct the other sacred services of the Church ;

‘(4) To teach and baptise ; to instruct the young and prepare candidates for confirmation and for admission to communicant membership, and to admit approved candidates to communicant membership ;

‘(5) To use every opportunity to evangelise those who are outside, to bring men to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to build them up in their most holy faith ;

‘(6) To this end, to be diligent in private study and prayer.’

(vi) That the last two lines of para. 4, page 38, read—‘ by the Synod, with such modifications by the Diocesan Council as local circumstances may necessitate and which are sanctioned by the Synod.’

(vii) To add to para. 5, page 38, the words—‘ and shall refer his appointment to the Executive Committee of the Diocesan Council.’

(viii) To alter Chapter III, ‘ The Membership of the Church ’, pages 34 to 36, as follows :—

‘ 1. The Church of South India acknowledges that entrance into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is through faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord, through whom men receive the forgiveness of their sins ; that to all who possess this faith is promised the gift of the Holy Spirit whereby every believer shares in the blessing of free and immediate access to the grace of God in Christ. It is expected that the gift of the Holy Spirit will be evidenced by a life of obedience to the commandments of God ; especially to the two great commandments of love to God and to man, and by participation in the life of the Church, the community of believers.

‘ The Church of South India recognises that the privileges and obligations of its membership belong to every person who, being resident in the area of that Church,

has been baptised with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and

is willing to abide by the rules and customs of this Church, and
 is not a member of any Christian body which is not in communion
 with this Church, and
 is not excommunicated by lawful excommunication or an open apostate
 to some non-Christian religion ;
 and it acknowledges its duty and obligation to train all such members
 in the doctrines, duties and privileges of the Christian Church.

‘It is expected of all such persons that, after a due interval following baptism, they will make a public profession of their dependence in faith on our Lord Jesus Christ and of their wish to become communicant members of the Church. It is further expected that this profession will be made at a public service which involves reception into communicant membership of the Church, such service containing special prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit to the persons now to be received.’

Para. 2.—The section printed as para. 3 at present.

„ 3.—‘It is the privilege of every member of the Church to know himself a son in the family of God and to rejoice in the experience of his salvation. It is his duty to work out that salvation’—and continue as printed.

„ 4.—The section printed as para. 2 at present.

Paras. 5, 6 and 7 as printed.

2. THE MEANING OF THE PLEDGE, pages 15 and 28.—The Synod resolved to present the following statement to the Joint Committee:

‘With a view to preserving the spirit of the pledge, as various interpretations have been put forth, the South India Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church requests the Joint Committee to consider the re-wording of the pledge as a whole, so as to ensure that no minister shall be debarred from appointment to any church on the ground that he has previously been a minister of either an Episcopal or a non-Episcopal Church (see p. 27, para 12). In making all appointments, however, the appointing authorities will use their discretion to guard, as far as possible, against the causing of offence to any congregation by interference with the rites or usages to which it has been accustomed.’

3. *Voting by Houses*.—The Provincial Synod, having considered the resolutions of the Madras, Trichinopoly, and Hyderabad Synods, sees no reason for changing the method of voting adopted in the Scheme.

4. *Consecration of Bishops*.—The Provincial Synod considers it essential that in the consecration of bishops, presbyters shall normally be associated

with the bishops in the laying on of hands, it being remembered that the Consecrator is God. (Vote—36 for, 9 against, 1 neutral.)

5. *Use of the Creeds.*—It was resolved that no alteration was needed in the second para. of 4 on pages 62-63.

6. The Provincial Synod agreed to send the following suggestion to the Joint Committee :

That with regard to *Permanence of Appointment* (Rules 11, 12; pp. 39-40), it is advisable that some procedure should be laid down for the transfer of a bishop from one diocese to another, where this is considered desirable. Also, some explanation should be given of the procedure to be taken whereby the Moderator may be approached (see Rule 12, p. 40) by members of a Diocesan Council on the question of the ' compulsory resignation ' or transfer of a bishop.

7. The Provincial Synod of the Methodist Church in South India realising—

- (1) that one of the gravest dangers confronting the future of the Church in India is that it may falter in its call to be an aggressively evangelistic force in the land,
- (2) that such an opportunity of emphasising this aspect of the life of the Church will not come again to the three negotiating Churches, and,
- (3) that it is necessary to bind the three Churches together not only by the affirmation of a common belief, but also in the bond of a common purpose,

strongly recommends to the Joint Committee on Union, that both in the Foreword, and wherever possible in the Scheme itself, and in the Constitution, the duty of evangelism be kept to the front ; that one of the functions of the bishop shall be to lead aggressive action toward the coming of the Kingdom of God in the land ; that the call of the presbyter to the work of evangelism, and the enthusiastic assistance of the deacons and laity may be emphasised, and that membership in the Church may be outlined as including the absolute necessity and importance of not only going into the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature, but also in being witness to Jesus Christ our Saviour.

8. *The Ministry of the Laity.*—It was agreed that Mr. Gulliford should revise the chapter dealing with this subject, and submit it to the delegates appointed to attend the Joint Committee.

9. The resolutions passed by the S.I.U.C. Assembly were read, as well as the resolution of the Trichinopoly Synod, and it was agreed that the delegates should urge that the principle of ' the full spiritual equality and value of

the ministries of the three Churches' should find a place in the Basis of Union.

10. On most of the matters of business to be brought before the next meeting of the Joint Committee there were no materials available for discussion, and the delegates could not receive any instructions.

11. The Provincial Synod approved a suggestion of the Mysore Synod in regard to special meetings in the churches for consideration of the Scheme, and urges the churches of the Province to arrange for such meetings, and for retreats for ministers, evangelists, and others, at which the Scheme can be discussed.

12. The Committee for the coming year was appointed and the delegates to the next Joint Committee.

It will be seen from the Report of the Joint Committee and the new edition of the Scheme that most of the resolutions were adopted with slight changes, and the others were received with sympathy by the Joint Committee and referred to the Continuation Committee for incorporation into the Scheme.

H. GULLIFORD.

Unification of the Orthodox Syrian Church of South India

It is a matter for great thankfulness that the prospects of ending the unfortunate dissension that has existed in the Orthodox Syrian Church of South India for the last twenty-five years are now very hopeful. The difference arose not on any questions of faith but on the question of control of the temporalities of the Church by the Patriarch of Antioch. It was in 1909 that Patriarch Abdulla visited the Church on the West coast. He demanded from Mar Dionysius, the Indian Metropolitan of the Church, the execution of an agreement conceding to the Patriarch certain rights over the temporalities of the Church which the Travancore High Court had denied to him. On Mar Dionysius refusing to do this, he was excommunicated by the Patriarch. The Church became divided over the question of excommunication, more than half the people siding with the Indian Metropolitan and less than half with the Patriarch.

There was living at that time in Syria Mar Abdul Messiah who had been Patriarch before Patriarch Abdulla and whose *firman* (authority) had been withdrawn by the Turkish Government. Mar Dionysius invited him to Malabar claiming that as the Senior Patriarch, whose authority had been

withdrawn only by a non-Christian secular power, he was the rightful Patriarch. Mar Abdul Messiah came to Malabar and established what is known as the Catholicate, an institution which had been in existence in the long past but had fallen into abeyance for the last few centuries. The Catholicos then consecrated some Bishops and thus one part of the Church came to be governed by the Catholicos, Mar Dionysius and two or three Bishops on their side, and the other part by two or three other Bishops who had sided with Patriarch Abdulla.

Litigation soon arose over the properties of the Church, and after the High Court of Travancore had once upheld the excommunication, reversing the order of the lower court, it finally declared the excommunication as invalid on the ground that it was opposed to natural justice. Both Patriarch Abdulla and Patriarch Abdul Messiah died in the meantime and Mar Elias became Patriarch. In the interval between the first order of the High Court upholding the excommunication and the second declaring it invalid, Mar Dionysius took the extraordinarily bold step of going to Syria to meet Patriarch Elias and come to an agreement with him. During Mar Dionysius' stay in Syria, information reached Malabar that Patriarch Elias had accepted Mar Dionysius and a settlement had been arrived at. But on Mar Dionysius' return with Mar Julius, the delegate of the Patriarch, there was again trouble, one side holding that the Patriarch had accepted Mar Dionysius and the other side denying it. Affairs therefore continued as before.

The result of Patriarch Abdulla's action in excommunicating Mar Dionysius was to strengthen in the minds of a large section of the Church a conviction which had been growing for long that the Church in Malabar could never hope to be a strong and well-governed instrument for God's purposes until it had secured such autonomy as would prevent the interference in its internal administration of an outside authority like that of the Patriarch. The question of the Catholicate and the question of autonomy thus became one, and the way of settlement became one of discovering how much power could be reserved to the Patriarch without impairing the autonomy of the Church. Negotiations were opened again and again but no way could be found for the reconciliation of the conflicting claims. Then, on the invitation of Lord Irwin, Patriarch Elias visited Malabar, and Bishop Gore and the Metropolitan of India tried their best to bring about a settlement. But the claims of the Patriarch and the claims of the Catholicos could not be reconciled, and Patriarch Elias died in Malabar without seeing any way of settlement. Mar Ephraim Sevarius succeeded Mar Elias in 1932. Mar Sevarius had long been known to be a man of great learning and scholarship and of wide experience of men and affairs, and hopes rose high

in Malabar that he could find a way out of the *impasse*. It was known that he was very anxious for peace, and he requested the Bishops on both sides to meet and send him agreed proposals. Mar Athanasius, the chief Bishop on the Patriarch's side, visited Mar Dionysius, but no immediate settlement could be arrived at. Mar Dionysius died in February 1934. So long as Mar Dionysius was alive there was no question of a rival authority in the Church in Malabar in the eye of law. But as soon as he died, each side prepared itself for the fight by calling a general assembly of the Church to get Mar Dionysius' successor elected and consecrated. If the present settlement had not been arrived at we should have now seen two rival Metropolitans claiming possession of the properties of the Church and fighting their claims in the courts of Travancore.

The desire for peace was so widespread in the Church that when the fight became imminent, the suggestion was made that representatives from both sides should meet and discuss the situation. At a meeting at Alwaye under the presidency of Mar Athanasius, an influential committee of about fifteen people, both clergymen and laymen, with Mar Thimotheus as Chairman, was constituted to represent the Patriarch's side. A similar committee was constituted by the Catholicos to represent his side. The two committees met at Kottayam on Tuesday, the 13th of March. The questions at issue were so delicate and complicated that the Conference threatened to break up at many stages. But the Spirit of God was working in the hearts of the delegates so that when they met again after apparent failures, they attacked the points at issue with such charity and tolerance that an agreement was soon arrived at and signed by all present. The chief feature of the agreement is that while the Church in Malabar will be autonomous in matters relating to internal administration, certain powers are to be reserved for the Patriarch.

There is a very important question—perhaps the most important of all—left to be decided by the Patriarch and the Catholicos together, namely that of recognition. It is on this issue that the Conference threatened to break up at many stages, one side wanting to know how the recognition was to take place and the other side insisting on the need of some formality or ceremony preliminary to recognition. The question was finally decided to be left to the Patriarch and the Catholicos, but unless they can agree on that question there will again be trouble. There are one or two facts which are quite clear :—

- (1) No serious student of Canon Law has maintained that the consecration of the Catholicos by Patriarch Abdul Messiah is invalid. The utmost that can be said is only that it is irregular.

- (2) The Catholicos and the Bishops on his side have no doubt of the validity of their orders and will not submit to any formality or ceremony that can in any way be interpreted to amount to re-consecration.

Unless the Patriarch recognises these two facts and meets the situation in a truly statesman-like way there will again be trouble. The Catholicos will soon be going to Syria to meet the Patriarch.

The Orthodox Syrian Church of the West Coast of South India has a membership of over 4,00,000, and this ancient Church has immense possibilities for missionary service in India, if it can once again be unified and directed along lines of purposeful activity. All Christian friends are requested to pray that the Spirit of God may so work in the hearts of both the Patriarch and the Catholicos, who are soon to meet and confer, that this Church—full of great possibilities—may be preserved from disruption.

P. O. PHILIP.

Presbyterianism.¹

The fact that the Presbyterian Church of England is one of the smaller denominations in that country has led many seriously to underestimate the place of Presbyterianism in the world. Similarly, the fact that the Church of Scotland is a Presbyterian Church has given rise to the idea that the system had its origin in Scotland, and that its prevalence in other lands is due merely to the expansive tendency of the Scottish people. Such an impression, however natural, is quite erroneous. Any one who has had the privilege of attending a (quadrennial) meeting of the General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system, will realize that this is so. At a meeting which I attended at Cardiff in 1925, as a representative of the South India United Church, I found ministers and elders from twenty-five different countries, including fifteen on the Continent of Europe. In some of these, as in Belgium or Greece, the Presbyterian Church is small, and maintains itself with difficulty against the pressure of the prevailing Roman Catholic or Greek Church. In others, as in Holland and many of the Swiss Cantons, it is the Church of the great majority of the people; while in Hungary and France it includes a respectable minority, numbering, in the former case, about two millions and a half

¹ From an article in the *Calcutta Diocesan Record*, April, 1934.

and in the latter nearly a million. Speaking generally, we may say that except in Roman Catholic and Greek Church countries and in parts where Lutheranism prevails, the Churches of the Continent are Presbyterian.

ORIGIN

Nearly all of these Churches, as well as those in English-speaking lands, were led at an early stage in their separate career to adopt the views as to the nature of the Church which were taught and illustrated by Calvin in Geneva. They belonged to the Reformed branch of the Church, as distinct from the Lutheran, and while the division was due mainly to the inability of Calvin and those who agreed with him to adopt Luther's view on the nature of the Lord's Supper, it came also to be a division in the matter of church government. Regarding this Luther was quite indifferent, with the result that to the present day some Lutheran Churches, e.g. that of Sweden, are Episcopal, while the greater number have an organization which approximates to Presbyterianism. To Calvin on the other hand the well-being of the Church seemed to demand a return to a more primitive form of organization, and while he never went the length of declaring Episcopacy illegitimate (and in this he was followed by his greatest disciple, John Knox) he taught that it had no New Testament authority, and was less conducive to the welfare of the Church than the system which came to be known as Presbyterianism.

ORGANIZATION

We must now ask what that system is. Dr. Moffatt says,¹ 'Presbyterianism is the name for belief in the Apostolic and Catholic Church as governed by presbyters. There may be higher offices in the Church, occupied by individual presbyters for a time or even permanently, but there is no higher order of the Christian ministry than that of presbyters, who discharge the full functions of that ministry, administering the Sacraments, preaching the Word, ordaining to the ministry, caring for the souls of their people, supervising the discipline, service, and enterprise of the Church.' The claim which Dr. Moffatt makes here should be noted. Calvin and his fellow-reformers had no thought of founding a new Church, or of leaving the Catholic Church. Their effort was to remove from the Church a number of grave errors in doctrine and practice which had crept into it. Since the Church of Rome refused to submit to this work of purification, the Reformers were compelled to separate from it, the separation being in some cases, as in that of Luther himself, forced on them by excommunication. But while repudiating the Papal obedience they regarded themselves as maintaining the true Apostolic and Catholic tradition.

¹ *The Presbyterian Churches.* Methuen & Co. London. 5 s.

Calvin was thus led to a re-examination of the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Church and its ministry. He was led to the view—now generally held by scholars of all communions—that in apostolic times bishops and presbyters were identical, and that the only other order of the ministry was the diaconate. The confining of certain functions to bishops arose in later times, and could not be said to be essential. While, as we have seen, the appointment of bishops was not regarded as inherently wrong, the Reformed Churches on the Continent were led by various circumstances to prefer the simpler form of organization, and in the course of time some were led by the exigencies of controversy to maintain the ‘divine right’ of Presbytery. But this view was not generally held, and it is doubtful if any scholar holds it now. All that is claimed by the most ardent Presbyterian is that the government of the Church by presbyters is the earliest known form of government, and that by experience its value for the promotion of the ends of the Church has been abundantly tested.

The form of Presbyterian government now most widely prevalent was not reached all at once, and the circumstances of different lands led to variations in detail. Taking the system as it prevails in Scotland, and lands to which Scotsmen have carried it, we find a gradation of ‘courts’, as the governing bodies are called. First, there is the session, consisting of the minister of a local congregation with a larger or smaller body of representative elders. The latter are laymen in the sense that they are not specially trained, and follow their ordinary callings. But they assist the minister in his pastoral work, and the session as a body has the oversight of the spiritual work of the pastorate, including church discipline. The next highest court is the Presbytery, consisting of all the ministers of a given area with at least one elder from every congregation. Next comes the Synod, in which a group of Presbyteries finds its unity; and over all is the General Assembly, consisting of ministers and elders appointed in equal numbers by the Presbyteries.

Each of these courts is responsible to the one above it. The records of sessions, for example, are scrutinised by the Presbytery, those of the Presbytery by the Synod, and those of the Synod by the General Assembly. An appeal lies from court to court. A member, for instance, who is put under discipline by the session may appeal to the Presbytery, and so on.

The proportion of ministers and elders in the various courts varies; but no court is a purely ministerial body, and in most the number of elders is at least equal to that of ministers. In some Churches elders are simply members of a committee; in others they are regarded as presbyters and are ordained as such, while still, as said above, following their ordinary vocation. In fully organized Churches deacons are similarly ordained to their office, and they are

associated with the session in dealing with the financial affairs of the church. But elders and deacons are not regarded as ministers, and if an elder becomes a minister he must be ordained as such.

But while, on strict Presbyterian theory, the ministry is simply a subdivision of the eldership, in actual fact the difference between the two offices is considerable. For one thing, the teaching ministry is ordinarily exercised by the minister alone, and for this he undergoes a long course of training. In Scotland the ordinary course is one of four years in one of the universities, and three years in a theological college. In other lands also the educational standard for the ministry is high. Again, while Presbyterianism maintains strongly the priesthood of all believers, the administration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper is in the hands of the minister.

ADVANTAGES

Such are the main features of the Presbyterian system. No one supposes that in each detail it can claim New Testament authority, but its advocates regard it as being in its main principles founded on Scripture. They also maintain that it works. The ideal of Presbyterianism was set forth in a striking way by an eminent Scottish divine of last century, Dr. Rainy. In trying to show that in resisting the attempts of the Stuart kings to force them into Episcopacy, the Scottish Churchmen of that day were not fighting for a shadow, he said:—

' Presbyterianism meant organized life, regulated distribution of forces, graduated recognition of gifts, freedom to discuss, authority to control, agency to administer. Presbyterianism meant a system by which the convictions and conscience of the Church could constantly be applied by appropriate organs to her affairs. Presbyterianism meant a system by which quickening influence anywhere experienced in the Church could be turned into effective force and transmitted to fortify the whole society. Presbyterianism meant a system in which every one, first of all the common man, had his recognized place, his defined position, his ascertained and guarded privileges, his responsibilities inculcated and enforced, felt himself a part of the great unity, with a right to care for its welfare, and to guard its integrity. From the broad base of the believing people the sap rose through Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods to the Assembly, and thence descending diffused knowledge, influence, organic unity through the whole system. Yes, Presbyterianism is a system for a free people that love a regulated, a self-regulating freedom; a people independent, yet patient, considerate, trusting much to the processes of discussion and consultation, and more to the promised aid of a much-forgiving and a watchful Lord.'

In the movements at present on foot Presbyterians are keenly interested. If now and then they seem to act with excessive caution they do so because they believe that this form of government has in it valuable elements which they have no right to barter. While admitting that Episcopacy has some advantages, and willing to adopt it for the sake of these as well as for the sake of union, they are very desirous that in entering the union they may have full freedom to bring into the united Church what has proved of greatest value in the experience of the past.

J. H. MACLEAN.

Indianization of Worship in the Christian Church*

By P. A. THANGASWAMY, B.A., M.L.

The term 'Indianization' sounds rather revolutionary. Used in connection with worship it can never mean the substitution of the present worship in Church or outside by Indian forms of worship, be it either Hindu or Mahomedan. It can only mean the contribution which India can make to the Christian worship of the one God in order to make it real to the soul of the worshippers. The Church, organized in a geographical area having a natural, political or historical unity of its own, has a life of its own with a character, conditions, and needs peculiar to itself, and it has also in its measure the liberty which belongs to the Church of Christ to order its own life in continual dependence on the Spirit of God. The liberty of a regional Church has enabled, and may in any place enable, the God-given genius of great nations to find its appropriate expression in the worship and work of the Church, and so the riches of the nations have been carried into the city of God. As the Church of England, receiving Catholic Christianity from the undivided Church, has given a characteristically English interpretation of it, so the Church of India is expected to give a national interpretation of the same common faith and life.

Need for Indianization. Is there then a deep and real need for Indianization? The answer is unanimous from the Christian and the non-Christian point of view. A principal of a High School in Bengal writes as follows :— 'The Indian Church is dissatisfied with the form of worship in vogue in the

* Copies of the complete paper may be obtained from Mr. Thangaswamy at 4 as. each.

Christian community at the present time. It is Western and foreign to the genius of the country. The Indian mind naturally tends towards ritual—rites and ceremonies—in worship. India is a deeply religious country and abounds in so many rites and ceremonies that I do not think we should hesitate to make use of them in our worship simply because they are non-Christian. I sometimes wonder whether, if Christ had been born in this country, He would not have accepted them. Did He not say, "I came not to destroy but to fulfil"?"

'What is the view-point of those outside the pale of the Christian Church? It is common knowledge that our services are Greek to them, devoid of the least attraction. India is the land of *bhaktas* and *bhakti*. Does the non-Christian find *bhakti* inside the church? What is worship? In one word it is adoration, reverence that we pay to God. The question is whether we have been able to foster the spirit of worship in our Christian community. Knowing as we do what happens in our Church services, we can hardly say that we have succeeded.

'And fully conscious of this position the Christian Church of to-day is feeling after ways of religious expression in thought and worship which will be in harmony with the deepest aspirations and finest traditions of India's religious quest. And concerning the development of public worship the principle which the said Church has set before itself in its constitution is 'to work towards the development of forms of worship congenial to the nature of the Indian races'.

Great thinkers amongst the Indian Christians as well as their Western friends sincerely believe that if Christianity is ever to become a power in India and hopes to bring India under the banner of the Cross, the Church in India must think for herself and interpret in life and word the teaching of the Lord. We must recognize that there are God-given talents and qualities peculiar to every nation or group of people who have been for ages moulded by environments peculiar to different climes and countries. Quite naturally the manner in which these groups give outward expression to their inward devotion to God differs in various ways. And religion to be living and progressing in India must be Indian in expression.

1. CORPORATE WORSHIP

Worship is of three kinds:—(1) Corporate, (2) Family, (3) Individual. Let us consider what India can contribute to these forms of worship. The contribution may be either by the use of proper accompaniments and vehicles of worship or the adopting of rites and ceremonies and observance of social customs and festivals.

Among the Hindus there is practically no corporate worship in the sense in which we have it, but there are rites and ceremonies and festivals which we can profitably introduce in our corporate worship.

The first thing which strikes a non-Christian when he enters our place of worship is that we do not regard it as a sacred place, as a place where we go to meet God in a special way. We enter it in any way we like. The Hindu when he enters his temple and the Moslem when he enters his mosque, takes off his shoes and sees that he himself is ceremonially clean. Then the posture in which he sits or prostrates himself is an outward expression of his devotion. The posture has a great deal to do in helping us in our worship. Kneeling does not appeal to an Indian. Either prostrating or sitting cross-legged in the *padmasana* form on the floor is what we should encourage in an Indian Church, and the sooner we get rid of benches and chairs from our Churches the better. The fact that the sermon is an inseparable part of the services in most of our Churches greatly lessens the element of worship in our Churches. When a visitor or new speaker is arranged to preach, the ordinary mind not overflowing with devotion is concentrated on the speaker, and throughout the service the mind eagerly awaits the sermon. If we are anxious that proper emphasis should be laid on the aspect of worship the sooner the routine sermon is abolished the better. Then the other phases of worship would be restored, prayer, confession, praise and enlightened faith. Some of them are entirely gone from the Churches. The people no longer pray but listen to the minister as he prays. Worship has become a passive matter. The congregation has become an audience—a body of listeners.

And it is on this basis—laying greater emphasis on the objective side—that I would advocate the use and offering of flowers and incense, with ringing of bells. The Christa Seva Sangham, a band of English University men, who for the love of Jesus and the love that constraineth them to love India, have set a noble example for the English missionary anxious to bring India to the feet of Christ, and have attempted to remove the obstacles from the patriotic Indian who sees Jesus and Christianity as foreigners. They have become Indians in order to win Indians for Christ. They are clad in *khaddar* robes. They wear sandals, sit on mats on the floor. They are strict vegetarians. They are *brahmacharins* and *parabrahmacharins*. They offer *bhakti* six times a day and sit in *dhyana yoga* for long hours. They have their *bhajana* in Marathi and *vandanams* in Sanskrit. They offer devotion amidst all the rapture of bells and incense and flowers. What is the cumulative effect of all this? One fruit of their ideal conduct is that three Hindu *Sanyasis* have visited their *ashramam* for spiritual guidance and one of them has expressed his desire to choose a *guru* among them. The Sangh sets up a standard of Indian Christianity that must one day influence Indian Christians to come back to the simplicity of ancient India in the mode of

life, and her spirituality in the matter of thought and action. It teaches not only patriotism and *tapashya*, but *bhakti* and self-sacrifice. Will this not affect Indian society? It will mean a religio-social reformation in time to come.

2. MUSIC

Nothing stirs an Indian so much as good Indian music. As the pilgrims march to the sacred places they cheer and inspire each other by singing those *bhakti* songs which have been the meat and drink of their forefathers. Those who were watching the great march of the Satyagrahis could not but be impressed by the inspiring effect upon those brave bands, of the songs and music which form part of their daily devotional life. Indian Christian poets, like Vedanayaga Sastri, Krishna Pillai, Narayan Vanian Tilak and several others, have poured out their souls in heart-moving strains of Indian lyrics. Some of these have come out of their deep experiences of God.

Most of us may have heard the singing of *Devarams*. How beautifully the word signifies the nature of the music. They are really garlands worthy of being placed at the feet of our Lord and Master. I would ask the priest or the pastor, and the choir-master of the orthodox Christian Church imbued in English music, to introduce the singing of *Devarams* in the place of anthems and see what a wonderful effect it has on your congregation and how attractive it is to your new convert. Try the *Tc Deum* in Tamil set to Carnatic music, and be sure that your convert will be able to join in it with a buoyancy and enthusiasm you have not seen before.

In Tamil music there are various kinds of composition well suited for use on different occasions. The *Kavadi Sindu* is one which is well adapted, not to a choir walking in stately procession, but to a group of devotees who have to walk long distances to have a *dhursan* of their deity. The *Nondi Sindu* is admirably fitted for narrating historical events. Psalms 78, 105 to 107, if rendered in this form, will easily catch the imagination of the Indian listener and will be easier also to memorize. The *Ammanai* is another form in which narratives can be cast. I know of a village congregation in which the life story of Moses has been rendered in this form and old men sitting up throughout the night listening to the same without getting tired.

A word about instrumental music. The violin, the harmonium, mridangam and cymbals are some instruments that can be introduced to enliven our services. The Bishop of Dornakal bears witness that the introduction of Indian cymbals, *melam*, and hand organ has helped to brighten Sunday services in many places.

3. CALL TO WORSHIP

There is something beautiful and reverential when we hear the sound of the conch shell and the bell in the case of the Hindus and the muezzin in the case of the Mahomedans. When I was a Hindu boy I used to think that there was a divine call in the sound of the conch shell. The sound appealed both to the ear and heart. I wonder if the bells that are rung on Sundays before our church services begin call forth the same feeling in our minds.

Again, a Hindu temple or a Mahomedan mosque is open throughout the day; but a Christian place of worship is open twice only on Sundays and possibly once on a week day. A church will provide a better atmosphere than the home to offer your prayers and worship to God. We ought to have our churches open throughout the day and encourage the congregation to have resort to the churches for private worship, meditation and prayers.

4. CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

This will be a proper place to consider the architecture of our church buildings. A building set apart for worship in India must inspire the Indian mind, whether Christian or non-Christian. Let us never forget that all we feel, sing, wish or do (if we are going to be true to our high calling) must be directed to efficient Christian witnessing; otherwise our religion becomes selfish and meaningless. One feels thankful that already there is a move in the right direction in several places. I believe that in one place in North India an attempt has been made to build some village Christian churches according to Indian ideals. At Trinity College, Kandy, a beautiful church modelled on Buddhistic architecture is being built. I understand a church modelled upon Indian architecture has also been completed at Erode. All honour to those servants of God who have been moved by the visions of that new type of the Indian church that is to be!

In South India there is a wonderful temple architecture of the so-called Dravidian type, and this has been the admiration of many, both Indian and foreign, for its artistic taste and originality. The open *mandapam* type of architecture with its broad halls beautifully suits our climatic conditions, when slightly modified, for Christian worship and preaching.

5. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Here one must say something about 'the Church' as an organized body. Intensity or solidarity in organizing religion, or conservation and preservation

of the same by enunciating hard and fast creeds and dogmas, have not been India's way of dealing with the things of the unseen and eternal. Very great freedom of thought and latitude in theological views have characterised the evolution of religious thought and expression in India. Indeed Hinduism is really a compound of several schools of religious thinkers and sages who have not often seen eye to eye with one another. The only binding common factor is the fact of all these religious systems having been born out of a common aspiration after the unseen and eternal of men of God in India.

Also the *Purohit*, the Priest, the *Sadhu*, or any other member of a religious order has the very minimum only (or perhaps nothing at all) of any ecclesiastical or community organisation binding him by a code of regulations or 'Rules of an order' or Church. None of these have any fixed regular monthly income, or graded 'salary scale'.

Now in all these there are obvious dangers and perhaps difficulties to make them fit into modern conditions of life and society. But have we no lessons to learn from the spirit of the whole thing, if not from the actual details of the same?

The following is a suggestion. It appeals to me as a possible way out of the expensive and unnatural ecclesiastical system we have got into. Let each congregation have a number of its most devoted and consecrated leaders among its members ordained as 'Ministers' or 'Priests'. They may be the local doctors, teachers, engineers, Government officials, merchants, or some such, earning their livelihood according to their training, but receiving no salary from the church for their religious work. As there would be a number of them appointed to each church on the model of the Apostolic method, there will always be somebody at the station free to attend to church duties in case others are busy or away. As for fully theologically-trained and whole-time service men for the ministry, these should be unmarried men who could be travelling round the churches as guests of the members of the churches, cheering up the local clergy, and giving them such spiritual instructions as may be necessary, or holding 'Retreats', etc., for them, as well as taking part with them in the church services. But no distinction shall be made between the married and the unmarried clergy as far as their position as ministers of the Church is concerned. Both shall be unpaid.

Also, theological institutions should be modelled as far as possible on the basis of a *Gurukula*, and a family atmosphere should be created. The relation between the teachers and the students should be more after that of the *Guru* and the *Chela* or that of a father and son, the utmost cordiality and the spirit of love pervading all human relationship. As far as possible there should be the outward symbols of an inward fellowship through such ordinary details as the sharing of meals or lodgings. This will nurture

mutual love and confidence and encourage the students to open out the deepest things of the heart to the teacher.

6. FESTIVALS

Our religion is a religion of joy, but we express very little joy in worship. It is the greater efficacy of the objective over the subjective forms of worship, coupled with their usefulness in kindling the religious spirit in man that induces me to advocate the holding of more festivals in the Church. Besides the celebration of purely Christian festivals, the Christian community should associate with the Indians in festivals which have no religious significance.

What meaning is there in celebrating the New Year's Day? Is it a festival of the Church? No. The Prayer Book does not refer to it. It does not prescribe any collect, epistle or Gospel for that day, except on the ground that it is the day of Circumcision. Is it not a purely European and American New Year's Day? The Tamil Christian community is to be blamed if it does not ask for God's blessing on Tamil New Year's Day and the Telugu Christians on the Telugu New Year's Day.

The *Pongal Pandigai* is a festival in which we can take part with the Hindus. During this festival there is a general cleansing of the houses and new rice is cooked and offered to God. This is purely an agriculturists' festival. There is again the *Deepavali* festival which is celebrated in remembrance of a great national delivery—that can be compared to the Passover of the Jews and St. George's Day for the Englishmen and St. Andrew's Day for the Scotchmen. *Ayudha Pujah* is another festival of this kind. It is the festival of the mechanic and the artisan when the Hindu lays down his tools at the feet of his God and asks for his blessing. Our Lord was a carpenter and if He were born in India, He would certainly have joined in celebrating this festival. Will the Christian Church care to think over this?

Occasionally there ought to be a festival probably lasting for some days, at which men from all parts of the Diocese congregate. The account given to me by the Superintendent of the Nelliappar *Devasthanam*, Tinnevely, of the *Ani* festival celebrated in it suggests to me a parallel which may with advantage be copied by the Christians of any Diocese. In each day of the festival a particular attribute of the supreme God is emphasised. The decoration of the *vahanam* and the vestments and ornaments on the idol, and the *ghoshti* and procession that accompany the processional car are so arranged as to rivet the attention of the worshipper on one of the attributes of the Supreme God: creation, preservation, grace, etc.

7. INDIVIDUAL WORSHIP

Individual and Family Worship. By family worship we usually mean just family prayers which we have or ought to have in our houses once a day, when we read a lesson from the Bible and say a prayer or two. The Hindus regard all life as worship. They do not do a single thing which has not a religious background; even the writing of a letter or going on a journey has something to do with religion. Family or individual worship in the case of an orthodox Hindu is performed at a place where he has his household god or goddess. I think our family will be spiritually uplifted if we have a room or some place in our house set apart for our devotion and prayers. The Hindus have a religious ceremony for every phase of human life from birth to death—at the birth of a child, when the child eats the first morsel of food, when the boy begins to read and write, when he gets a sacred thread, at various stages of a girl's pregnancy, at marriage and death.

We, Indian Christians, have much to learn in the matter of family and individual worship also. If there is a worshipful spirit in individuals and families it will be carried into our churches. Then our churches will be really and truly Indian and we shall be able to attract the non-Christians, who will get something in the Christian worship which they fail to get in their worship.

Book Review

The Presbyterian Tradition. (By C. L. Warr, D.D., Alex. Maclehorse & Co., London. 7s. 6d.)

The fact that this book has as its sub-title *A Scottish Layman's Hand-book*, may give the impression that it will be of no interest to any one not connected with Scotland; but while some chapters are of special interest to Scotsmen, others make their appeal to a wider circle. The occasion of the book is the response of the Church of Scotland to the Lambeth Appeal, as presented to the General Assembly of 1932 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, himself a son of the Scottish Church. The writer, who is minister of St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, is one of those whose views prevailed in the General Assembly of 1933, when it was decided by a small majority that further conversations between the representatives of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland could take place only on the basis of the frank recognition by the former Church of the full validity and regularity of the orders and Sacraments of the latter.

In order that Scottish laymen may have a clear idea of the issues involved in all discussions on wider union, Dr. Warr has gone back to the beginning and traced in an interesting way the history of the Church from the time of our Lord to the present day. In the first two chapters he traverses familiar ground, dealing, from a Presbyterian standpoint, with the origin of the ministry. The author believes that Christ definitely created a religious society, which He called His Church. In early days the twelve are the dominating figures in the scene, but 'there is no shred of evidence in Scripture to suggest that either by direct word or inference did our Lord give any indication as to how the future development or extension of the Apostolic Ministry was to be ordered . . . He did not tie the hands of the Apostles by specific and detailed injunctions. They were left, as regards the transmission of the ministry, to deal with future emergencies as they arose, and as circumstances and conditions yet unforeseen might from time to time make their own peculiar demands'. In accordance with these, first 'the seven', whom Dr. Warr regards as deacons, and then elders in every church, came to be appointed. The Episcopate of later days was not a continuation of the Apostolate, but an evolution from the Presbyterate. The story of the evolution is told once more, and in telling it the author does not differ in anything essential from Bishop Lightfoot and many other Anglican scholars. The same may be said of the chapter on the rise of the Papacy.

Before dealing with the Reformation, Dr. Warr calls attention to an element in the life of the mediæval Church which is often overlooked—the opposition between the monastic ideal and the episcopal. The emergence in the fourth century of the monastic ideal and its rapid organisation was at first strenuously opposed by the bishops. 'In the Western Church the monasteries were never subjected to the episcopate. . . . Through them . . . the tradition that in the beginning bishop and presbyter were one and the same office persisted and was never annihilated'. The monasteries were ruled by abbots, and in most cases abbots were mere presbyters. The first Lateran Council (1123) was attended by three hundred bishops and six hundred abbots, and 'the greater abbots, though only presbyters, were invested by the Pope with the mitre and crozier'. 'Thus it was not by any fortuitous chance that nearly all the Reformers came from the dim tranquillity of the monastic cloisters, nor that with them Presbyterianism emerged with a confident claim to be the rightful heir of primitive Church order.'

After a concise account of the Reformation, as led by Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, Dr. Warr goes back to the history of the Scottish Church. He shows that it was not till the twelfth century that it came fully under allegiance to Rome. The Celtic Church of Ireland and Scotland was one of

the great missionary Churches of the world. Quoting from John Richard Green our author says, 'At one time, in fact, it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed; as if the older Celtic race that Romans and Germans had swept before them, had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors, as if Celtic, and not Latin, Christianity was to mould the destinies of the Churches of the West'. An interesting account is given of the Church of St. Columba, which for centuries had its centre in the island of Iona. What has been said of the monastic element in the mediæval Church is pre-eminently true of the Columban Church. It had bishops, and only bishops could ordain. But they had to ordain any one the abbot thought worthy of ordination. Thus the statement often made, that it has always lain with the bishops to decide on the candidates for ordination, requires qualification. Dr. Warr shows, however, that it cannot be maintained that the Columban Church was essentially a Presbyterian Church. To a large extent it shared those views of worship which were afterwards at the Reformation condemned as superstitious.

The Roman domination of the Church lasted only about four hundred years. Starting as a religious movement, which led to the erection of the great cathedrals and abbey churches, it became a source of terrible evil, and for the work of the Reformers there was a clamant call.

In the chapter on the Reformed Church in Scotland the part which will be of most interest to the general reader is that which deals with the attitude of John Knox and his colleagues to the Catholic Church. 'The Reformers', says Dr. Warr, 'were, to a man, what to-day we would call High Churchmen. They strenuously resisted any suggestion that they were either innovators, heretics, or schismatics. They maintained that they were Catholics, nor did they consider that aught they were doing constituted in any way a breaking of the unity of the Universal Church. It remained intact, the Divine Society of Jesus Christ, broad-based upon the Catholic Creeds and the great Œcumenical Councils. Constituent parts thereof might hold it necessary to overhaul their ecclesiastical machinery and remove certain observances, ceremonies and orders of ministry which, in no sense rooted in divine injunction or revelation, but merely the outcome of human inventiveness or action, had been clearly demonstrated as both unscriptural and mischievous'. The Reformed Church of Scotland regarded itself as in fellowship with the Reformed Churches of other lands, such as Hungary, Poland, France and Switzerland. The doctrine of the Sacraments is distinctly 'high'. 'We assuredly believe', says the first Scots Confession (1560), 'that in the Supper, rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined with us that He becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls'.

Another matter of common interest is the proof that Knox had no rooted objection to Episcopacy. 'Nobody particularly wanted to remove the episcopal order; but if that order remained obdurate, proving itself a stubborn menace to the reformation of the Church, the Reformers knew their ecclesiastical history well enough to be persuaded that its removal was practical and justifiable, since in the Early Church bishop and priest (presbyter) were one and the same order.' It was at a later stage, when the folly of the Stuart Kings tried to force episcopacy on an unwilling people, that the Presbyterianism which we associate with Scotland at the present day was worked out. The story of the struggle which followed is concisely told, but no attempt to summarise it can be made here. All that need be said is that if in the eighteenth century the desire of the best of Scottish Churchmen for pure doctrine and godly living led them to go beyond what was reasonable in the matter of separation from the established Church and from one another, the succeeding centuries have shown that Scottish Christians have not lost the desire for unity, and have to a wonderful extent overcome the difficulties in the way. If, at the present day, many hold that for a considerable time no further progress is to be expected, and that the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Episcopal Church must remain apart, it must be remembered that it is the history of their Church which makes them cautious, and unwilling to consider any movement towards union which may prevent them from making the fullest contribution to the life of the united Church which their past experience enables them to make.

Any Indian who may read the book—and it may cordially be commended to the attention of Indians—may naturally say that in the details of the struggle in the West they are not interested. Yet they may learn something from this piece of Church history, and can sympathise with the hesitation which some in the West feel with regard to the Scheme. Yet while it may be obvious that the time for further union in Scotland has not come, this should not prove an obstacle in the way of the union in India of Churches having a Scottish ancestry with others which have a very different origin.

The book is not entirely free from errors. The writer repeats the common statement that 'to Zwingli the Holy Communion, as a mere feast of remembrance, centred in the crucified Christ, of whose Passion the bread and the wine were but symbols, rather than the living and ascended Saviour, who, through the elements, communicated Himself to His people, in all His divine life and power'. The present reviewer has it on the authority of a first-rate Church historian that it was not Zwingli, but the Unitarian Socinus, that looked on the Supper as a mere commemoration. Again, not all will accept the disparaging view of John Knox which the writer urges; nor

will his view regarding the regular transmission of orders through an unbroken succession of presbyters find general acceptance. To most Scottish Churchmen of the present time it matters little whether the succession was broken at the Reformation or not. But the book may be cordially commended as one which has much to teach regarding the issues that are at stake in the discussions on union which occupy our thought at the present time.

J. H. MACLEAN.

Clippings

The Road to Reunion*

The problem to be solved is how to bring the Churches together, so that there shall be no barriers to fellowship among Christians and no discordant note in their witness to the world. To many Nonconformists the solution seems very simple. They say, 'We are ready for the fullest Christian fellowship, but what can we do when others make conditions which seem to us impossible? Why cannot we have fellowship with each other, without any of these conditions?'

But we must learn to respect the opinions and consciences of others, however diverse they may be from our own. This means grace and patience; but these are precisely the qualities which ought not to be lacking in Christian men. The difficulties to be overcome fall into two classes. First, those which are purely human—all too human. Into this class fall ignorance and all manner of prejudices. But to admit that these cannot be overcome by God's grace is to confess that we despair of the power of the Gospel. In the second place, there are doctrinal difficulties. These are proving very hard to overcome, but it will be a tragedy if they are held to be insuperable. Surely those who are joined together by love for Christ ought to be able to find a way of dwelling together in unity without injury to the conscience of any.

No Anglican has rendered greater service to the cause of Reunion than Dr. Palmer, formerly Bishop of Bombay. Twenty-five years ago he went out to India a rigid High Churchman, a typical product of the Oxford Movement. He would still describe himself as a High Churchman, but his practical experience in India has taught him much. He has learnt that there is no profit in holding principles as it were *in vacuo*, but that ways must be discovered of applying them to existing circumstances. Thus he has learnt to accommodate himself to facts—especially the fact of the manifest operation of the Spirit of God outside the Episcopal communions. Preaching in Westminster Abbey last June, he made a statement which demands greater attention than it has received. He said, 'I will withstand anybody to the face who wishes to say that for this Sacrament, or for the forgiveness of sins, a priest is essentially and indispensably necessary. There is no evidence for that in the Bible, and there is much against it. I know what an indispensable priesthood can do; you know by report what indispensable priesthods have done in dark Africa or in civilized India; and this terrible temptation to the ambitions of men has produced tyrannies as fierce, as wild, as any tyrannies of kings. And I will not cease to say that this was not the meaning of the Lord in calling His Apostles, nor is it the will

* From a leading article in the *Methodist Recorder*, April 12th, 1934.

of God to invest any of His creatures with such absolute indispensability.' This, taken by itself and as it stands, concedes all that Free Churchmen ask, but the Bishop goes on to say, 'At the same time, I will not cease to say that the Church was quite right in making the rule by which the celebration of the Eucharist is confined to the priest, a very good rule of order—probably the best that could be made—but not an essential condition of the existence of the Sacrament.' Is this to take back with one hand what has been given by the other? We do not think so. The same apparent inconsistency and illogicality is to be found in Methodism, which, while conceding in principle that lay celebration is permissible, yet in practice and as a

matter of order limits the function to the ordained ministry. Principle has to be accommodated to practice. We do not know how far Dr. Palmer's utterance is representative of the mind of the Anglican communion. Probably he is far in advance of some of his brethren. But does not his admission point a possible way out of the *impasse*? If it is granted that Episcopal orders are not indispensable, is it not possible for the sake of an act of unity to recognise existing regular ministries, and to come to an agreement as to the rules of order which shall thereafter prevail? With the spirit of accommodation and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, this might prove to be the road to Reunion.

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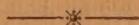
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